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CHURCH SCHOOLS

AND

STATE INTERFERENCE.

A LETTER

ADDRESSED, BY PERMISSION, TO THE

RIGHT HON. WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE,

M.P. FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

BY

GEORGE ANTHONY DENISON, M.A.

VICAR OF EAST BRENT,

PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY,

AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS.

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A

L E T T E R,

&c.

MY DEAR GLADSTONE,

IN the early part of the summer I published a brief correspondence between the Secretary of the Committee of Council and myself, on the subject of some assistance towards the school of this place, which I had proposed to derive under the late Minutes. I was compelled to withdraw my application, and to seek to provide from other sources for the increased efficiency of my school, in consequence of certain grave apprehensions having been forced upon me respecting the character of the scheme then lately propounded by Government. I was unable *then* to reconcile it with my duty to the Church—and all that has since passed, has confirmed me in the belief that I decided rightly—that I should be in any degree a party to a system, which—if carried out in what I judged to be the spirit of those who proposed it—and there *was*, and *is*, every indication that it

will be so carried out—threatened to inflict a very heavy blow on the integrity of the teaching of Church schools, and therein, on Catholic truth.

The substance of this correspondence will be in your recollection, because you wrote to me on the subject, and expressed your opinion that the danger which I feared was a remote one. I was sensible that it *was* remote in the sense of its being the last, as well as the greatest, injury, which the undue action of the influence and authority of the State could bring upon us; but I feared *then*, and I am persuaded *now*, that, in point of time, it is *not* remote: there are certain steps to be taken—certain stages to be gone through—before it can be thoroughly developed; but the experience of the last few months has shown in how determined a spirit that course has been entered upon, which threatens to terminate, at no distant day, in the establishment of State authority over the schools of the Church.

Between the dates of the first and last letter of the correspondence referred to, there appeared a very remarkable pamphlet, the authorship of which is attributed, and I am told correctly, to the Secretary of the Committee of Council; it was headed, “The State, the Church, and the Congregation:” it appears to have had a very extensive sale, and is doubtless well known to all who take any interest in the Education question.

This pamphlet, among other things, professes to give an “explanation of the Minutes.” I pass by

the somewhat anomalous proceeding of a secretary of a government department publishing an anonymous semi-official pamphlet on matters belonging to his department. My business is to call attention to the fact that "the explanation," so called, has hardly any affinity to the thing which it professes to explain. And I insist upon this, as the first indication of a disposition to develop the Minutes into something which they neither say, nor, by any legitimate process of reasoning, can be made to imply: it was the statements of this pamphlet which aggravated all my previous apprehensions, and confirmed me in my suspicions of what lay behind the apparently fair and impartial character of the Minutes themselves. From that time I could no longer doubt at all that we should shortly experience—what the few last months have not failed to produce—the beginning of a systematic attempt to introduce the State principle into Church schools: the exact form which the attempt would assume was all that remained to be ascertained. I may add, that I have reason to know that I am by no means singular in the feelings and the judgment I have expressed, but that a like effect has been produced in a like manner on the minds of other men.

I propose to deal simply with the acts of Government in respect of educational measures since the promulgation of the Minutes: there are to be found in these acts certain very plain indications of what will be the ultimate issue of the system now before

the country. I cannot think it wise or safe that Churchmen should disregard these indications; so far from it, I am sadly persuaded that unless the Church will now show an united front—with something of that vigilance, and energy, and determination which are so remarkably displayed by those who conduct the operations of the State in matters of education—and unless she will take care to make it very plainly understood that, if protest and remonstrance fail, she is prepared to educate her children without State assistance—I am sadly persuaded that she will find herself in a few years placed in a position of unexampled difficulty, and will have to fight her battle at a very far greater disadvantage than at this moment.

One principal source of the danger appears to be, that individual Churchmen are in many cases able to satisfy themselves that, so far as they and their own parishes are concerned, they cannot see any reasonable cause for alarm, either present or future, in the acceptance of assistance upon the existing conditions annexed to it by the State. And having thus satisfied themselves that they and those entrusted to them are secure, they conclude that the danger, to which their attention is invited, does not really exist, or that it is, at least, much overstated and exaggerated, and this without a due regard to the counterbalancing safeguards which are in the hands of the Church.

I beg, very respectfully, to say, that the supposed security of individual parishes is not *all* the question;

and I use the word "supposed" because it is, I think, impossible to shut our eyes to the fact, that, according to the present policy of the State in respect of education, the promoters and supporters of Church schools cannot be said to know from one day to another what language will be adopted towards them, or what conditions will be imposed upon them, either as regards the continuance of assistance already placed at their disposal, or of that for which they may for the first time prefer a claim.

But, granting the security to be not supposed, but real; it is surely not *all* the question. It ought, indeed, to have been in the power of every parish clergyman to look at the question of Government assistance, simply as a question of being the better enabled thereby to carry out more efficiently the objects of his school; because there should have been nothing between him and Government but the want of help on the one side, and the disposition and the power to grant it on the other; *to grant it on certain definite terms, known and recognised by both parties, without so much as a shadow of interference direct or indirect*: but Government will not allow us to regard the matter in this light. They are not simply granting aid, they are constructing a system of education. Now, I am not saying at all that some system is not necessary, though it may very well be doubted whether one of less complex machinery would not have been better suited to the wants of the people, and less open to jealousies and distrust.

But, when the system itself is not free from suspicion, and the administration of it is found to be of the most shifting, uncertain, and arbitrary character, it becomes necessary for every Churchman to consider well every feature of the system itself, and to watch carefully every part of its administration, however minute and apparently insignificant, not simply as these concern himself, and those on whose behalf he acts, but as they bear upon the interests, and affect the legitimate influence and the usefulness of the Church.

Now, I will admit freely, that the parties who have initiated this scheme for subjecting the schools of the Church to State influence, and who are now seeking to carry it out—in a manner which, to say the least of it, looks very like a disposition to work on the necessities of the clergy and the laity¹, and to take advantage of the honest desire of the Church at large to improve both the quantity and the quality of education—I will admit freely and fully, that they too have an honest conviction that they are doing what is best for the furtherance of the education of the people. But the course they propose to themselves is one which the Church cannot recognise without surrendering her principles, and the steps they are taking towards it are palpably unjust. Their view appears to be that they should arrive by a circuitous route at that combined system of education,

¹ See Appendix A.

which, for the present, they have formally abandoned, as utterly unsuited to the religious judgment and feelings of the English people; and, with this view, they are taking steps which cannot be justified by any thing to be found in the relative positions of the State and the Church of England.

This alleged view of the Government may, doubtless, be disclaimed; it may be said that they have not so much as a wish to see the combined system introduced into this country; but a disclaimer like this can hardly be accepted in the face of what we find in page 54 of the "Explanation." "Little reflection is necessary to show why a statesman *should prefer* a system of combined education." Or again, on the other hand, while the existence of such a preference is allowed and defended, it may be said, as we find a few lines further on in the "Explanation," "Experience shows that against such arrangements (i. e. arrangements for a combined system) the religious sympathies of the country revolt;" and this may be turned into an argument to prove that all apprehensions on this subject must be idle. But, if the Government neither wish to introduce the combined system, nor, however they may wish it, regard it as a thing practicable, I ask, for what possible purpose, and with what conceivable view, is their present interference taking place? It is surely not pretended that it is for this end—that the State may act together with the Church in the internal management of Church schools? The Church

repudiates all idea of co-operation such as this ; nor, indeed, is it possible that it should exist without an abandonment of principle on one side or the other. The State is in favour of the unrestricted use of private judgment : the Church is, and must ever be, against it. The State is disposed to quarrel with the exclusive teaching of the Church : the Church knows that unless this teaching *is* preserved most carefully and most scrupulously, all education will be worse than valueless. And, though it may not, perhaps, have entered into the contemplation of those who exclaim against the exclusive teaching of the Church, that it is not simply the orthodox belief of the Church herself, which has, under God, been preserved thereby, but that it is to the same cause that separatists themselves are indebted for such amount of right belief as may still exist among them ; yet no one, who has been accustomed to look at these things beyond the surface, has any doubt that this is the exact truth : the Church is not prepared then, and God grant she never may be prepared, to surrender one particle of that teaching ; she looks with the utmost jealousy and alarm and suspicion on any scheme which appears even by implication to menace it.

It cannot, therefore, be with a view *to a share only* in the management of Church schools that the State is interfering now. It knows too well that such joint-management is not possible under any circumstances. It is, indeed, perfectly open to the Church and the State to move forward, in the matter of the education

of the people, upon two parallel lines; the State assisting the Church, the Church returning the gift with large increase, by extending the sphere of her religious usefulness; but they can never, under the unhappy religious circumstances of this country, without the surrender of those principles which are the life of the Church, move on the *same* line. So soon, indeed, as the line of the Church begins even to converge towards that of the State, the danger becomes very great. I forbear to say more upon the character and the amount of that danger, when this convergence has reached its limit, and both lines are merged into one. But is there not great cause to fear that the line of the Church, not indeed in respect of the principles she asserts, but of the practice into which she is betrayed, *is* converging towards that of the State: nay, more, that it has, to some extent in respect of the Education question, become already *merged* in it? In how many instances has the State principle, in one degree or another, under some insidious pretext of toleration, or convenience, or necessity, wound its way into the teaching and management of Church schools? and Churchmen have bowed before it, and have compromised *their* principles, forgetting, as a writer in the English Journal of Education has well said, *WHOSE* principles they are.

Now the State, certainly, is sparing no efforts to bring the matter to this issue throughout the entire number of Church schools. But as for any *union*

between the State and the Church, the object of which shall be the *joint* administration of Church schools, without prejudice to the independent action, and the legitimate authority of the Parochial Clergy, this the State knows very well is not possible. If, then, such joint administration of Church schools be altogether out of the question, alike repudiated by the Church, and judged to be impracticable by the State, it must be something very different from this which the State is proposing to itself; and as it is, I think, plainly impossible to discover any reason sufficient to account for its present course, but the desire so to modify the character of the Church schools, that these, at least, may no longer present any obstacle to the favourite project of combined education, I am driven to the conclusion that it is this system, and nothing else, that the Government have in view.

The year 1847 will be long remembered as the commencement of a new era in respect of popular education; but what the character of that education is to be in Church schools is yet, I fear, to be decided. If State interference is altogether excluded, it will be Church education; if it is admitted, it will be something altogether different. It is a question that presses for a prompt and positive decision. The State *has made* one great move towards securing its object; and there has been in the history of the movement a vigilance in watching for opportunities, and a determined boldness in profiting by them all, which reads us a great lesson. Church-

men easily satisfy themselves, perhaps, that there can be no danger of the introduction of the combined system; many are disposed almost to laugh down any apprehension of it they may hear expressed: they trust, I fear, too much to past experience, to present feelings, and existing circumstances; they forget that the State has assumed an attitude altogether new, is about to employ more ample means and a vast machinery; they forget that it *has moved already*, and is marching on, while the Church is but just awakening to her danger, and beginning to think of protest and remonstrance.

But before we turn to the actual step which the Government has already taken, and find in it a yet further indication of what will be the issue of the present system, I must detain you for a few moments by an attempt to contrast the state of feeling with respect to the Education scheme existing now, with that so generally pervading all classes of the Church eight months ago.

In the course of last autumn, the minds of Churchmen were much agitated by the appearance of a letter from Dr. Hook to the Bishop of St. David's on the Education question. The statements of that letter, and the known tendencies of the Government, and of many members of the Legislature, excited the gravest apprehensions as to what was likely to be proposed in respect of education in the last session of Parliament; and when the Minutes appeared, and it was understood that there was no

intention of attempting to introduce the combined system, but that the Government plan was simply to carry out, with more ample means and on a larger scale, the principle already established, of general and impartial assistance to all classes of the religious community, Churchmen were glad and thankful to be relieved from their apprehensions; and, when it appeared further that the scheme of Government was likely to meet with considerable opposition from various bodies not in communion with the Church, many Churchmen went so far as to join in petitioning Parliament to give their assent to it.

In the approval expressed by this act of petitioning Parliament, I was never able to concur. It always seemed to me that it was one thing for Churchmen—admitting, as I do myself, the very great difficulties of the case—to accept the assistance offered by Government as simply their due, and to use it for good, as far as this might be possible without the compromise of any principle; and quite another thing to express any *approval* of a scheme like the Government scheme: for there is so much to be deplored by all Churchmen in the fact of a State which possesses, as a primary element of her constitution, a branch of the Church Catholic, being led by her religious divisions to grant aid from State funds towards the teaching of error, that Churchmen are bound, as it seems to me, to confine themselves to a *bare assent* to a plan of this character, as being what, *in its whole aspect*, they cannot approve.

It is unnecessary to revert to the details of the proceedings in Parliament; there is little in them to which the Church can look back with any satisfaction. Suspicions, indeed, that *all was not right* had begun to creep in long before the vote was passed, arising chiefly from the publication of the anonymous pamphlet referred to above. Some faint tones of remonstrance were heard; and many persons who had petitioned in favour of the Minutes, began to wish that they had been less precipitate. Some curious instances of the power of expansion and development, so inherent, as it would seem, in Minutes of Council, and which render them so dangerous a substitute for an act of Parliament, had extorted strong expressions of distrust and disapproval in high quarters; but, on the whole, the Education scheme may be said to have been still regarded as full of promise when the Parliament was dissolved.

A few months, however—not to say a few weeks—have witnessed a most remarkable change: general distrust has taken the place of individual disapproval; and Churchmen are, more or less, afraid of the scheme out of which they had hoped so much good might arise; promoters of schools are refusing Government aid; others are hesitating what to do—hesitating between their necessities and their fear of committing themselves to a vicious principle, and embarrassing all their future efforts to maintain the integrity of Catholic teaching. The Bishop of this

Diocese has addressed a public remonstrance to the President of the Council; a numerous meeting of the Clergy and laity have tendered him their respectful thanks, and have signified their cordial concurrence in the terms of his remonstrance. The Diocesan Education Board has added its voice to that of the general meeting. There are many signs that similar expressions of distrust will be heard from other Dioceses. The Archdeacon of Durham has, in a late Charge, called the attention of the Clergy of his Archdeaconry to the hardship of the circumstances in which the Church is placed; and a resolution of remonstrance has been adopted by them, and communicated to the Committee of Council. Another resolution has been passed by the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education, which states very clearly and forcibly the objectionable character of the novel conditions which the Committee of Privy Council are imposing on the promoters of Church schools, and the great danger of the precedent of State interference which this course appears to introduce. The Church at large feels that she has been betrayed into a false position, and that she is reaping a very bad return for the confidence she allowed herself to repose in the intentions of the State.

Such then *was* the state of feeling among the members of the Church in respect of the Government Education Scheme; such *is* the state of that feeling *now*. By what fatality has it happened that,

when all obstacles appeared to be removed, when all manner of exclusive claim was disavowed on the part of the Church, and all that was asked was that the Government would help the Church as it helped others, on the same principle, and within the same limits,—by what fatality, I say, has it happened that all the promise thus held out of a better state of things has been *destroyed* by the aggressive act of the Government?

Now it would obviously be absurd to refer this act to a mere wanton exercise of power, however it may wear this appearance: there *must* have been some object before the Government of sufficient importance in their eyes to make them content to sacrifice, as they have done, the good-will and confidence of the Church—something to outweigh in their judgment all considerations of the value of retaining that good-will and confidence. Under an aspect then of the relations of the Church and State so extraordinary, and so little in accordance with what the Church had allowed herself to hope, we look most anxiously to discover any sufficient cause; and we can find none but an adherence, howsoever disclaimed, on the part of Government, to the combined system, and a hope that it may be possible to adapt the circumstances of Church schools to that system, and gradually to prepare men's minds for the introduction of it at some future time. But was it worth while that for the sake of paving the way for the application of a theory, which they themselves

affirm to be *inapplicable* to the requirements, and utterly unsuited to the religious feelings and judgments of the people,—was it worth while that, for the sake of an object like this, the cordial and safe co-operation of the Church with the State should have been rendered hopeless?

I think it is impossible to be denied that it has been no inconsistency on the part of the Church, but simply and solely the act of the Government, which has been the cause of this wretched state of things. It is a heavy charge; for it comes to nothing less than this,—that the Government have, by an act unjust in itself, and imposed in a clandestine manner, by an usurped authority, made it impossible for the Church at large to have any confidence in the present administration of the Committee of Council. It is a heavy charge, but it is easy to make it good: because the acts of Government are in evidence against itself; and the documentary evidence, besides, is full and complete. Let us see first, therefore, what have been the steps by which the Government have approached their act, and after this what has been the act itself.

It would seem then, that the Government having had forced upon them the conviction that it was only through the instrumentality of the Church schools that it would be possible to do any thing on an extended scale for the education of the people, were, nevertheless, very unwilling to part with the hope of bringing these schools, by a gradual process,

to be so mixed up with, and so dependent upon, State assistance, that it would, at no distant time, be comparatively easy to engraft upon them a State character, and that the Minutes of 1846, as explained by the Secretary of the Committee of Council, were the fruit of these joint considerations.

In the prosecution of their plan, two sets of cases have presented themselves: one of Church schools already in existence, and subject to Government inspection; the other, of schools proposed to be established. It is the act of the Government in respect of these last, which has furnished a clue to their intentions in respect to the whole number of Church schools: they have—by what authority we have yet to learn—imposed certain management clauses on the promoters of new schools, as a condition of their receiving aid at the hands of the State: they have, in direct contravention of their own avowed principle of non-interference, interfered with a peremptory claim to legislate *without authority of Parliament, or consent of the Church*, for the constitution and management of Church schools: they have imposed conditions upon Churchmen which they have not so much as sought to impose elsewhere. If, then, it appeared to be impossible, during the early part of this year, to reconcile the profession of impartiality with the then declared *animus* of the Government, I ask now whether it is not plainly impossible to reconcile it with their *act*?

I need not enter into any discussion of the details of these clauses—they have been so ably sifted and exposed in many quarters²; the unreal character of the ground on which they are said to have been introduced—viz. the securing the greater and readier co-operation of the laity—the manner in which they contravene certain great, and hitherto acknowledged principles of school management—their inapplicability, however varied, to the circumstances of by far the greater number of schools—the elements of confusion and uncertainty they contain—the plausible character of their checks and safeguards, with all their real and practical futility;—all these things have, in the course of the last few months, been made so apparent, that I may be excused if I pass the clauses by with this one remark; that if it had been the *avowed* purpose of the promoters of them to deliver all Church schools, that might thenceforth be established, bound hand and foot, into the power of the State, they could hardly have devised any thing better calculated to ensure their object.

It is very deeply to be regretted that the National Society should have been induced to give even a modified assent to these clauses: I say a modified assent, because it should be borne in mind that no two things can possibly be more different from one another than what the National Society *agreed to*

² I may refer particularly to the letter of the Rev. Henry Wilberforce to Sir Robert Inglis, and to an article in the July number of the "Christian Remembrancer."

do in compliance with the wish expressed by Government in the early part of 1846, and that which the whole subsequent course of the Committee of Council *assumes them to have done*.

I am not the apologist of the Society; and, to say truth, I think it would be a hard matter not to admit that they have made a very great mistake. The point I press is this:—that the Government have taken advantage of so much of assent to their plan as they found it possible to extract from the Society, to defend and justify a course which not only has the Society never sanctioned for one moment, but which she has, from the first, *formally deprecated in all her communications to the Committee of Council*.

The Government then, which in the early part of 1846 sought for the concurrence of the National Society in *recommending* these clauses—for the word used in the printed Minutes of the correspondence that took place on the subject is “recommend³”—in prosecution of that curious system of development, which is peculiar to every thing connected with an Education minute, have lost no time in converting a recommendation into an authoritative interference. And as the case stands *now* between the Church and the State, Churchmen must either submit to have unfitting conditions imposed upon them in an unfitting manner, and by an usurped authority, or they must forego their fair share of that assistance which

³ See Appendix B.

has been, it is said, offered generally and impartially to all promoters of education throughout the country.

And here it must not be lost sight of that there are two separate questions before us. And unless they are, in any discussion that may arise, kept entirely distinct, I am much afraid that we cannot look to come to any satisfactory conclusion: one is, what should be the character of a management clause? the other, whether the Church is prepared to acquiesce in the Government *insisting* upon such a clause, or upon any thing else besides inspection, as defined and agreed upon in 1840, and the legal tenure of the site of the school? Now these are, in fact, questions quite independent of one another; and it will be obvious at a glance, of how great importance it is that they should be kept distinct. It is possible, indeed, that some persons may be able to satisfy themselves that the management clauses are not, after all, of that dangerous character and tendency they are represented to be; but by what process of reasoning it is to be inferred, that the Committee of Council are *therefore* to be allowed to *impose* them upon the Church, it is not easy to understand.

For the first of the above questions, I am inclined to believe that little mischief would arise from a management clause, provided always, that the appointment and dismissal of the master, mistress, &c. were made to rest exclusively with the minister of

the parish. In case his churchwardens, or his parishioners at large, judged him to be abusing his trust, an appeal to the bishop would be the one fitting remedy; but whatever other powers of control and management it might be deemed advisable to place in the hands of the lay members of a committee in parishes, *where there is room for such a committee at all*, I cannot think that it would be right that they should have any voice in the appointment or in the dismissal of the master, mistress, or teachers. Nor do I believe, that, generally speaking, the lay members of the committee would have any wish to be entitled to interfere in the matter. The good sense and right feeling of the laity are, as it seems to me, hardly estimated at their just value by the Committee of Council.

For the second, whatever might be the character of a management clause, and however little objectionable on any grounds in itself, I should say it was the plain duty of the Church not to acquiesce, under any circumstances, in the claim of Government to impose it as a condition of assistance ⁴.

⁴ It will appear by this, that I can by no means concur in the opinion expressed by Mr. Wilberforce in his letter to Sir Robert Inglis: He says (p. 9), "that Her Majesty's Ministers had a right to reopen this question (*i. e.* the question of the conditions on which assistance should be granted by the Government and accepted by the Church), by imposing new conditions upon future grants, is indeed certain."

I cannot concur in this, because it is not possible to conceive

Now of these two questions, the last is incomparably the most important; because if a management clause is vicious in principle—as the present clauses are—there is, nevertheless, so long as it is not imposed by any external authority, a great security in the common sense of those who would witness its operation; their experience of it would, in a very few years, render its provisions a dead letter; they would be adopted in no new cases, and the clause would be virtually repealed: but to admit the claim of Government to *insist* upon the adoption of a management clause (whether vicious in itself, or harmless in itself), this goes at once to fix the precedent of State interference—of that interference which the Government have expressly disclaimed—

any new conditions which should not have the effect, directly or indirectly, of interfering with the internal management of Church schools; and such interference is neither allowable, nor is it practicable without the deepest injury to the Church, under any aspect of the relations between the Church and the State. The two conditions—of a good legal tenure of site, and the right of inspection, as defined and agreed upon in 1840, are the only *possible* conditions in which the Church can acquiesce with any safety, under any circumstances that have existed for many years past, or are likely to exist in this country.

Mr. Wilberforce, indeed, expressly bars the introduction of all conditions “which might hereafter have the effect of altering the character of Church schools, and introducing into them the foreign plan of combined schools;” but the point I insist upon is, that it is impossible to conceive *any* condition whatsoever, besides the two above specified, which must not *necessarily* be more or less of this character.

and to expose Church schools to a perpetual meddling. In what this meddling is likely to end, it can hardly be necessary to say.

With respect to schools already established, and the proposed grants for pupil teachers, stipendiary monitors, &c., it is obvious that there is here a vast and increasing machinery, which it will not only be easy to make a channel of State influence, but which can scarcely fail, if the principle of State interference be not surrendered altogether, to carry into the schools of the Church whatever may happen to be the peculiar views of "the managers of the Minutes for the time being." It always appeared to me that that opposition of religionists, not in communion with the Church, to the Government scheme, which proceeded upon the assumption that this portion of it would augment very largely the power and influence of the State, was by no means so groundless and unreasonable as it was very commonly declared to be.

I may be allowed, in illustration of what I mean, to suppose a case, which no man can say is not a very likely one to occur. I take the present disposition of Government to see what can be done towards converting the Church schools into State schools, as a thing proved, beyond all dispute, by their own statements, and by their own act. I look at the tendencies of a large and increasing section of the House of Commons, and the small amount of any countervailing influence in the House of Lords. It

seems difficult to doubt that what are commonly called "liberal" views in respect of Education, as of other things, will become more and more in the ascendant; and thus the Government of the day will soon find themselves in a position to make new and more stringent conditions with the promoters and supporters of Church schools; to promulgate minute upon minute, and to assign to each, as often as they please, a new and arbitrary interpretation. Suppose, then, a school to have received a grant for pupil teachers, &c., and that, as would commonly be the case, its general efficiency has been thereby much increased; suppose the Government to say, "It is true that, not long ago, we granted you this assistance without annexing any condition to it; but public opinion is strongly in favour *now* of your relaxing your rules, and opening your doors to all, without restriction or exception. We are under the necessity, therefore, of requesting you to inform us whether you will consent to do this; because, if not, we are not prepared to continue to you that assistance which has made your school so efficient."

I am not suggesting at all—God forbid—that very many would not be found, when this alternative was put to them, at once to make their election, and to prefer the integrity of Church teaching to all the advantages of State assistance. But that there should be room for the alternative at all, is of itself an enormous evil, and one to which the Church will be exposed in proportion as she avails herself of the

assistance of the State. And if this is likely to cause much entanglement in the case of schools which know nothing of a management clause, it is easy to see to what an extent the existence of such a clause in the Trust Deeds of a school must complicate and augment the difficulties and embarrassments of the parish Clergyman.

I cannot think that it is to attach any undue importance to the above considerations, to say that they ought, at least, to be sufficient to make all Churchmen, whether purposing to found new schools with the help of Government, or to increase the efficiency of existing schools by the same help, *to pause and to stay their hand*. A delay of a few months cannot be of much consequence in any case ; but it is of the last consequence that Church schools should not be based on a vicious principle of management ; or, so long as the present attempt of Government to coerce the promoters of Church schools shall be allowed to have its way, to admit into their schools the seeds of future State influence. And it is very important also to bear in mind, that it is just in proportion as the alarm and disapproval of the Church is openly and generally declared, as well by individual Churchmen as through the Diocesan Boards of Education, that there will be a reasonable hope of persuading the State to retrace her steps, and to return to that fair, and impartial, and simple principle of assistance, which was, only a few months ago, hailed with such general satisfaction by all those

most concerned in the education of the people. Under the present aspect of the case, and on the painful supposition that Government will allow their own better judgment to be overruled, and will determine to persevere in a course which has been condemned already by many Churchmen, and which only waits for something more of experience of its effects, to be alike condemned by all, we are driven to the conclusion that, if the Church would preserve the integrity of her teaching and discipline, *she must be prepared to educate her children without State assistance.* To such an unhappy position have we been reduced by the aggressive policy of Government; and so entirely, and so unavoidably, in the minds of Churchmen, has jealousy and suspicion taken the place of that generous confidence, which, under management more wise, more kindly, and more just, would have accepted gladly, and acknowledged thankfully, at the hands of the State, the means of greater usefulness, and the power to discharge more effectually the office of the Church.

It cannot, I think, be denied that it is a very hard case, and one which lacks all signs of that fair play which the English people are said to love. It is a hard case, under whatever aspect it is viewed; whether we consider the peculiar ties which bind the State of England to the Church of England, or whether we take a much lower ground, and regard it simply as a question of the fair application of a portion of those resources which are entrusted to

the Government for the general benefit of all classes of the community. It has not been uncommon of late years to hear it cast as a reproach upon the members of the Church of England, that they would have funds, which are drawn indiscriminately from persons of all forms of belief, applied exclusively for the increasing of *her* usefulness and the extension of *her* influence. But the members of the Church have no desire of the kind, though they cannot go so far as to say that they must not ever regard it as a great evil, that religious separation from her body should have forced upon the State the necessity of caring and providing for the education of large masses of the population, who are not in communion with the Church. The Church, indeed, cannot consent to part with any of those rights which still remain to mark her peculiar position in this country; but seeing that the State is itself divided, and that all sections of the people are charged alike with contributing to the necessities of the State, the Church is *content*, though she cannot be *glad*, that the assistance of the State should be divided too.

Let it be allowed, then, that it is fair and reasonable that it should be so, is there no *unfairness* in *this*? that the State, receiving much more largely from members of the Church of England than from any other portion of the people, should impose conditions on them, which on others she does not impose? and even if she *did* enforce similar conditions upon others, as she does upon the Church,

the question would yet remain behind, whether the State can be justified in imposing *any* conditions which the Church repudiates, as crippling her energies, tending to confuse truth and error in the minds of men, and interfering with the legitimate exercise of her functions in the education of her children.

The magnitude of the interests concerned, and the imminent danger to which the Church is exposed lest there should be established against her the evil precedent of State interference, will be, I trust, a sufficient apology for an attempt to suggest, at the close of this letter, a remedy for a state of things which every Churchman must very deeply lament, and which is full of threatening and mischief.

Seeing then that Educational Minutes are open to so great abuse, and that they can hardly be made the basis of any scheme without subjecting the scheme itself, and those who administer it, to perpetual suspicion and distrust, I would propose,

1. That the use of Educational Minutes be abandoned altogether.

2. That an Act of Parliament be substituted in their place⁵. The provisions of the Act, so far as they shall concern the Church, to receive the formal assent of the clergy in both Houses of Convocation, or

⁵ The large increase that is contemplated in the Education grant, will be, with a great many persons, a sufficient reason by itself for subjecting the disposal of the whole of it to the provisions of an Act of Parliament.

in diocesan assemblies to be convened, under the authority of the Bishop in each diocese, for this special purpose, before they are passed into a law.

3. The Act to define very precisely the conditions on which the State is prepared to grant, and the Church to accept, assistance from Government towards the building, and the increase of the general efficiency of Church schools.

4. These conditions to be but *two*:—1st, That the site of a school seeking aid be legally secured, according to the provisions of acts already in force.—2ndly, That it be open to Government inspection, as defined and agreed upon in 1840.

5. That Commissioners be appointed under the Act, and a Secretary, through whom all applications are to be made; the discretion of the Commissioners, in respect of granting or refusing aid to Church schools, to be limited to ascertaining whether the above conditions have been, or will be, accepted.

6. That the arrangement of all details be confided to the Commissioners, but that they be expressly debarred from interfering, on any pretext *whatever*, directly or indirectly, with the management of the schools.

7. That a report of all the proceedings of the Commissioners, and of the disposal of all funds entrusted to them, be laid every year before both Houses of Parliament.

I believe that an arrangement on these principles would restore the confidence of the Clergy and the laity, and remove the obstacles which now forbid all cordial co-operation between the Church and the State.

Believe me,

My dear Gladstone,

Very sincerely yours,

GEORGE ANTHONY DENISON.

East Brent, November 17, 1847.

P. S.—Since the above was written I have seen a copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Committee of Council to the Secretary of the Education Board of this diocese, dated November 1, 1847.

That letter acknowledges the receipt of a copy of a resolution passed at the general meeting of our Diocesan Societies, held at Wells, on Thursday, Oct. 21, and states, that “ My Lords having lately had the subject of that resolution under their consideration, have determined to adhere to the Minute of June 28, 1847.”

The meaning of this is, I conclude, for it is not stated in so many words, that “ My Lords will adhere to the course they have adopted of imposing the management clauses on the promoters of Church schools as a condition of assistance.”

The appeal, therefore, to the Committee of Council has signally failed ; and as the manner of the answer appears to hold out no prospect at all that a more general appeal will meet with any more favourable consideration, all that remains for the Church *now*, is to see whether her claims to be dealt with on the commonest principles of justice and fair play, will find any greater acceptance with both Houses of Parliament.

APPENDIX.

(A.)

IN the case of the school at Enmore, near Bridgwater, in this diocese, the first application for aid to the Committee of Council was in or about the month of March, 1847. The application was made by the Secretary, Gabriel Poole, Esq., on behalf of the Subscribers.

At the time of the application, all parties concerned in promoting the school were altogether unprepared for any condition whatsoever being annexed by Government to the granting of aid, except the legal tenure of the site of the school, and the right of inspection, as defined and agreed upon in 1840.

It was not, indeed, possible that they could have had any knowledge that there existed an intention in any quarter to impose other conditions than these, when they combined to raise funds for the building of the school, and calculated upon their fair share of the parliamentary grant; because the Minute of the Committee of Council, which first gave any hint of such an intention, was not even agreed upon till June 28, 1847.

Some correspondence ensued, the details of which are of no importance to the general issue. It was closed, on the part of the Government, by a letter from the Secretary of the Committee of Council, dated August 3, 1847, of which the following is the concluding sentence:—"It would be with great regret that their Lordships would withhold their assistance; but I am to inform you, that they could not consent that the lay members of the Committee should now, or hereafter, owe their appointment, as managers, solely to the Bishop or Incumbent."

To this an answer was returned, dated August 6, 1847, by the

Secretary of the Committee of Subscribers, declining to accede to the condition insisted upon by the Committee of Council, and, consequently, relinquishing all assistance from the Government.

Now, it is impossible not to see, and not to lament very deeply, the *spirit* of this refusal on the part of the Government—the suggestion that the laity cannot and ought not to trust the Clergy—and that the Committee of Council have constituted themselves guardians of the rights of the laity as against the Clergy. But these are minor matters.

The points to which the attention of all Churchmen is most earnestly invited, are these :—

1st, That certain members of the Church of England, Clergy and laity, combine to found a school.

2ndly, That they propose to give the effective control of that school to the Ecclesiastical authorities.

3rdly, That, *because they do this, and for no other reason*, the Committee of Council refuse them any share in the parliamentary grant.

This one case, as it stands, would, of itself, be more than sufficient to prevent all Churchmen having the very smallest confidence whatsoever in the administration of the Committee of Council. But the charge against that administration assumes a much graver character, when it appears that the letter of the Secretary of the Committee of Council to the Secretary of the Subscribers to the Enmore school, enclosing a printed copy of clause B, and recommending its adoption, bears date *June 16, 1847, fourteen days previous* to the day on which, for the first time, the Lords of the Committee of Council agreed to a Minute, in which their Secretary is instructed to make such “ recommendation ” in communicating with applicants for aid ; for the date of this Minute is *June 28, 1847*.

On *whose authority*, then, was the recommendation made to the promoters of the Enmore school, in the letter bearing date *June 16, 1847*? Perhaps the Secretary of the Committee of Council will give an answer to this question.

(B.)

THE word used in the letter from the Secretary of the National Society to the Secretary of the Committee of Council, dated May 12, 1846, is “ recommend ; ”

As also in the letter of the Secretary of the Committee of Council, dated September 29, 1846. This letter also speaks of "procuring the adoption" of the clauses.

In the letter of His Grace the President, dated November 23, 1846, we find again the word "recommend."

Now let us look a little further into the Minute of June 28, 1847, which recites the above letters. Within the limits of its few pages, we shall see a most remarkable instance of the manner in which the proceedings of the Committee of Council are conducted.

"RESOLUTION I.—That the Secretary be instructed to *recommend* the adoption," &c.

"RESOLUTION II.—That the Secretary be instructed to *suggest* the adoption," &c.

"RESOLUTION III.—That the Secretary be instructed to *permit* the adoption," &c.

"RESOLUTION IV.—That the Secretary be instructed to *permit* the insertion," &c.

"RESOLUTION V.—That the following modification of these clauses may also be *permitted*."

But when we come, at the close of Resolution V., to schools "connected with the British and Foreign School Society," the words are, *again*, "that the following clause be *recommended*," &c. There is not a word *here* about "*permitting*."—That which, in the mind of the Committee of Council, is a very good rule as against the Church, is too certain to be resisted, and successfully resisted, if attempted to be enforced in any other quarter, *to allow of its being, generally and impartially, extended to all cases alike.*

THE END.



That the Church may walk
and in quiet times
a little in the way of peace.

Presented by Miss of Canterbury
at T. Wells 28 Jan 1875



